# IN MEMORY OF TIBULLUS: OVID'S REMEMBRANCE OF TIBULLUS 1.3 IN *AMORES* 3.9 AND *TRISTIA* 3.3

SAMUEL J. HUSKEY

In Ovid's epicedion for Tibullus (*Amores* 3.9), he pays tribute to his predecessor by incorporating into his poem several allusions to the epicedion that Tibullus wrote for himself (Tibullus 1.3).[1] The allusions themselves form a fitting memorial in the literal sense that they recall memories of Tibullus's poetry.[2] Many have commented on the allusive relationship between these two poems,[3] with recent discussions concentrating on the multilayered complexity that arises with the recognition that Ovid is alluding not only to Tibullus but to Tibullus's models.[4] If such complex allusions exist in

1 On the formal features of the epicedion in *Amores* 3.9, see Esteve-Forriol 1962.42–45.

2 See Sabot 1976.279 on Ovid's allusions as an homage to Tibullus: "C'est un hommage rendu par Ovide à son illustre aîné et les lecteurs de ce poème devaient trouver grand plaisir à reconnaître les mots, les expressions, les vers mêmes du disparu." However, see also Perkins 1992–93.459, who suggests that "the existence of parody in *Amores* 3.9 calls into question the notion that the elegy is a 'sincere' tribute to Tibullus."

3 Némethy 1907, Munari 1951, Lenz 1959, and Maltby 2002 catalogue the many places where *Amores* 3.9 recalls Tibullus 1.3. See also Boyd 1997.184 (esp. note 39), Taylor 1970.475–77, McLennan 1972, Sabot 1976.274–81 (esp. 279), Moreno 1995, Lenz 1997.302, and Perkins 1992–93. On Ovidian imitation of Tibullus's poetry in general, see Lenz 1997, von Albrecht 1982, Neumeister 1986.161–67, and Zingerle 1869.1.54–108.

4 See especially Reed 1997 and Williams 2003. Reed 1997.266 discusses the "complex nodes of imitation involving linked chains of models" arising from Ovid's double allusions to Tibullus's poetry and Bion's *Epitaph on Adonis*. He adds a further wrinkle to the discussion by pointing out Ovid's debt in *Amores* 3.9 to the anonymous *Epitaph on Bion* (also known as [Moschus] 3). Williams 2003 discusses *Amores* 3.9.19–20 as a double allusion to Tibullus 1.3.4 and Callimachus epigr. 2P.



*Arethusa* 38 (2005) 367–386 

*Amores* 3.9, then it is all the more likely that they will be found in Ovid's epicedion for himself in exile, *Tristia* 3.3.

In *Tristia* 3.3, Ovid revisits Tibullus 1.3, apparently finding cold comfort in sharing similar circumstances with Tibullus.[5] Both poets complain that they face death alone in a distant, unknown land.[6] Yet in his earlier poem, *Amores* 3.9, Ovid explained that Tibullus's worst fears were never realized: he returned to Rome, where, eventually, his family and loved ones attended his funeral.[7] This dichotomy between Tibullus's imagination and Ovid's reality is not made explicit in *Tristia* 3.3 but rather becomes evident only when *Tristia* 3.3 and *Amores* 3.9 converge in alluding to the same passage in Tibullus 1.3. Tibullus's poem, then, functions as a kind of linchpin that joins two divergent Ovidian interpretations of the same poem.[8] In each instance, a remembrance of *Amores* 3.9 reveals the comparison between Ovid and Tibullus in *Tristia* 3.3 to be specious, suggesting that Ovid deserves special sympathy for suffering what Tibullus only feared.[9]

## TOMIS: A LONG WAY FROM PHAEACIA

In the first few lines of *Tristia* 3.3, Ovid complains that he has fallen ill—so ill, in fact, that he has been forced to dictate his poem to someone else: "Haec mea si casu miraris epistula quare / alterius digitis scripta sit, aeger eram," *Tristia* 3.3.1–2 ("If you happen to wonder why this

---

5 On the relationship between Tibullus 1.3 and *Tristia* 3.3, see Luck 1977.176 ("Das Thema 'Krankheit und Tod in der Fremde' verbindet dieses Gedicht mit Tibull 1,3"), Videau-Delibes 1991.334, Owen 1893.37, Green 1994.236, and Nagle 1980.48–49. Although he does not discuss the relationship between *Tristia* 3.3 and Tibullus 1.3, see Lenz 1997 for Tibullus's influence on Ovid's exilic poetry in general.

6 Maltby 2002.186 (ad loc. Tibullus 1.3.4–5) remarks, "Death in a strange land far from one's loved ones was terrifying to the ancients," and cites as examples Verg. *Aen*. 9.485–87, Catul. 68.97–100, and Ov. *Her*. 10.119–24.

7 Cf. Thomas 1986.185 on correction as a mode of reference: "The poet provides unmistakable indications of his source, then proceeds to offer detail which contradicts or alters that source." See also Reed 1997 for a discussion of Ovid's imitation and correction of his models in *Amores* 3.9.

8 I am indebted to an anonymous reader of this paper for suggesting the image of the linchpin.

9 Cf. Thomas 1982.163 on the polemical nature of correction: "The poet rejects, corrects or pays homage to his antecedents, and—the ultimate purpose—presents his own as the superior version." See also Thomas 1986.185–89.

letter of mine was written by another hand, I was ill").[10] Of course, we must overlook Ovid's complaints elsewhere about the dearth of Latin speakers in Tomis.[11] In the next couplet, Ovid reiterates the gravity of his position (*Tristia* 3.3.3–4):

> aeger in extremis ignoti partibus orbis;
> incertusque meae paene salutis eram.
>
> I was sick in the furthest regions of the unknown world,
> and I was nearly uncertain of my safety.

The commentators agree that this passage most closely resembles Tibullus 1.3.3–4:[12]

> me tenet ignotis aegrum Phaeacia terris:
> abstineas avidas, Mors precor atra, manus.
>
> In unknown lands, Phaeacia holds me in my illness. Dark
> Death, I beseech you to keep your greedy hands away.

Verbal echoes buttress the contextual similarities shared by the two passages. Ovid has described himself with the same adjective that Tibullus used for his condition (*aeger ~ aegrum*); similarly, the land in which both poets find themselves is unknown (*ignoti ~ ignotis*). The identical line placement of these passages in their respective poems confirms the identification of Tibullus 1.3.3–4 as the source text for *Tristia* 3.3.3–4.[13] From the beginning, then, it appears that Ovid is pointing out how much his plight in exile is like that suffered by Tibullus before him.

---

10 For all passages from the *Tristia*, I have followed Luck 1967; for the *Amores*, I have followed Kenney 1995; for Tibullus 1.3, I have followed Luck 1998. All translations are my own.

11 E.g., *Tristia* 3.11.9, 3.14.39–40, 4.1.89–90, 4.10.111–14, 5.7.53–54, 5.10.35–38.

12 Luck 1977.177 ad loc. *Tristia* 3.3.3f. ("mit Anspielung auf Tibull 1,3,3"), Bonvicini 1991.314 ad loc. *Tristia* 3.3.3 ("Non sfugga la somiglianza con Tibullus 1.3.3"), Videau-Delibes 1991.334 ("le début de 3, 3 des *Tristes* ressemble à l'ouverture du poème 1, 3 de Tibulle où le héros se sent ainsi mourir"). Cf. Evans 1983.55, Nagle 1980.48, Owen 1893.37 (ad loc. *Tristia* 3.3.3).

13 Wills 1996.22–23 and 389–435 lists other examples of this kind of "positional marking," in which one text repeats words in the same line or even the same metrical position in which they appear in an antecedent text.

However, Ovid has alluded to these very same lines before, in *Amores* 3.9, to demonstrate the difference between Tibullus's imagined plight and the reality of his funeral in Rome (*Amores* 3.9.47–48):[14]

> sed tamen hoc melius, quam si Phaeacia tellus
> ignotum vili supposuisset humo.
>
> This is better than if with common dirt the Phaeacian land
> had covered you, unknown.

The key word in this allusion is the toponymn Phaeacia, which appears in the same metrical position as it does in Tibullus's poem (1.3):[15] "me tenet ignotis aegrum *Phaeacia* terris." The identical *sedes* and case of the word mark it as a point in common between the two poems, but it is, at the same time, a point of difference. On a very basic level, there is the syntactic difference that Phaeacia is an adjective in *Amores* 3.9 and a proper noun in Tibullus 1.3. Far more important than that, however, is the construction in which Phaeacia appears in the two poems. In Tibullus 1.3, "me tenet ignotis aegrum Phaeacia terris" is a statement of fact; in *Amores* 3.9, "quam si Phaeacia tellus / ignotum vili supposuisset humo" is a contrafactual condition. In other words, Tibullus was afraid that he would die in Phaeacia, but *Amores* 3.9 makes the case, literally and syntactically, that his fears did not materialize.

Even if Tibullus had been stranded on Phaeacia, would that have been so bad? The toponymn lends an element of fantasy to the poem, recalling the island paradise in Homer, a fact that may undercut Tibullus's claims of suffering.[16] The absence of the name Phaeacia from *Tristia* 3.3,

---

14 Others have even suggested that *Amores* 3.9.47–48 offers an eerily prescient view of the fate that awaits Ovid in exile. Sabot (1976.278) asks, "Ovide en écrivant ces vers, avait-il le pressentiment de sa propre mort solitaire en terre barbare?" See also Cahoon 1984–85.35, note 33: "Although he could not know it, the parrot [*Amores* 2.6] and Tibullus elegies [*Amores* 3.9] foreshadow both his hopes and fears concerning his own death."

15 Perkins 1992–93.463–64 also makes this observation. Williams 2003.225–26 begins his discussion with the occurrence of Phaeacia in *Amores* 3.9.47 and Tibullus 1.3.3.

16 Cf. Eisenberger 1960.191: "'Phaeacia' ist eine mythologische Anspielung, über die wir nicht einfach hinweggehen und für die wir nicht sogleich den Namen 'Kerkyra' oder 'Korfu' einsetzen dürfen." Nevertheless, other commentators *do* identify it with Corcyra and Corfu, but they also discuss its fantastic features (e.g., Maltby 2002.185–86 [ad loc. Tibullus 1.3.3]: "by using the name Phaeacia for what was known in his day as Corcyra (modern Corfu) . . .

however, suggests that there is nothing fantastic about Ovid's plight. He suffers in a real place that has no association whatsoever with Homer's pleasant image of Phaeacia. Indeed, later in the same book (*Tristia* 3.9), when he does resort to mythology to describe his surroundings, Ovid connects Tomis etymologically with the gruesome murder of Absyrtus by Medea.[17] Ovid's exile is fact, and to associate it with the fictitious world of Homer's Phaeacia in any way would undermine his message, which is that he deserves special sympathy when compared with Tibullus.

This last point is supported by the use of the adjective *ignotus, -a, -um* in all three passages.[18]

Ovid *Tristia* 3.3.3–4:
aeger in extremis *ignoti* partibus orbis;
incertusque meae paene salutis eram.

Tibullus 1.3.3–4:
me tenet *ignotis* aegrum Phaeacia terris:
abstineas avidas, Mors precor atra, manus.

Ovid *Amores* 3.9.47–48:
sed tamen hoc melius, quam si Phaeacia tellus
*ignotum* vili supposuisset humo.

In *Tristia* 3.3 and Tibullus 1.3, the adjective applies to a general location, emphasizing the great distance that separates the poets from civilization. It also implies that Tibullus and Ovid themselves will become unknown by

---

T. transposes his experience to the world of mythology and suggests parallels between himself and the wandering Odysseus who was shipwrecked there"). See also Cairns 1979.44–45, Bright 1971, and Mills 1973–74 on the Homeric reference. On the paradisiacal elements of Phaeacia, see Mills 1973–74.226: "The Homeric description of Phaeacia pictures a fertile land, blest with undisturbed happiness, and far removed from other peoples (*Od*. 6.8, 204–5)." He argues, however, that Phaeacia in Tibullus 1.3 is not "the golden age of Saturn's beneficent reign" (229). Cf. Cairns 1979.44–45 and Cook 1992, both of whom discuss the identification of Phaeacia with Elysium. Finally, see Peigney 1988, to whom Phaeacia seems to be "un monde où la parole et la poésie sont les garantes de la vie" (55).

17 At *Tristia* 3.9.33–34, Ovid suggests that Tomis derives from the Greek root *tom-* ("cut"), turning Tomis into something like "Chopville" (suggested by Green 1994.245) or "Hacktown."

18 Williams 2003.225 notes the echo of *ignotis* (Tibullus 1.3.3) in *ignotum* (*Amores* 3.9.48). See also Perkins 1992–93.463–64.

association with their unknown surroundings. In *Amores* 3.9, however, Ovid applies it to Tibullus himself, but he does so within the same contrafactual condition in which he placed Phaeacia, emphasizing the fact that Tibullus did not, in fact, die in obscurity but rather among his friends and loved ones, and with a great poet to memorialize him. This leaves Ovid to experience alone what Tibullus only feared.

## A LONELY FUNERAL

Dying alone in an unknown land means foregoing a proper funeral, since friends and family cannot attend to the required rituals. In exile, Ovid dwells on this prospect (*Tristia* 3.3.39–46):

> nec mea consueto languescent corpora lecto,
> depositum nec me qui fleat, ullus erit;
> nec dominae lacrimis in nostra cadentibus ora
> accedent animae tempora parva meae;
> nec mandata dabo, nec cum clamore supremo
> labentes oculos condet amica manus;
> sed sine funeribus caput hoc, sine honore sepulcri
> indeploratum barbara terra teget!
>
> My body will not lie on a familiar bed, and there will be no one to weep for me after I have been buried. A brief span will not be added to my life as upon my face the tears of my wife fall. I will not give my final instructions to my family and friends, nor will a friend's hand close my failing eyes amid the last cries of mourning. Instead, barbarous soil will cover this head, unmourned, and without the honor of a funeral or burial.

The context and the sentiments that he expresses recall Tibullus's poem (1.3.5–9):

> non hic mihi mater
> quae legat in maestos ossa perusta sinus,
> non soror, Assyrios cineri quae dedat odores
> et fleat effusis ante sepulcra comis,
> Delia non usquam;

> I do not have a mother here to gather my charred bones sadly to her bosom. Nor do I have a sister here to offer imported unguents to my ashes and weep before my grave, her hair disheveled. Delia is nowhere to be found.

In both passages, the repetition of negative words (*nec* in *Tristia* 3.3.39, 40, 41, and 43; *non* in Tibullus 1.3.5, 7, and 9) conveys the absence of loved ones.[19] Apart from that, the only other verbal similarity of note between the two passages is the echo of *sepulcra* (Tibullus 1.3.8) in *sepulcri* (*Tristia* 3.3.45). Nevertheless, the contextual similarities are undeniable: both Ovid and Tibullus are lamenting the absence of loved ones at their respective funerals. These similarities suffice to build on the allusive relationship that Ovid introduced in the first lines of the poem.

When viewed through the filter of *Amores* 3.9, however, the similarities turn into differences. The verbal echoes of Tibullus 1.3.5–9 in *Amores* 3.9.49–58 are numerous and significant:[20]

> hic certe madidos fugientis pressit ocellos
> mater et in cineres ultima dona tulit;
> hic soror in partem misera cum matre doloris
> venit inornatas dilaniata comas,
> cumque tuis sua iunxerunt Nemesisque priorque
> oscula nec solos destituere rogos.
> Delia discedens "felicius" inquit "amata
> sum tibi: vixisti, dum tuus ignis eram."
> cui Nemesis "quid" ait "tibi sunt mea damna dolori?
> me tenuit moriens deficiente manu."

> At least here your mother closed your swimming eyes as you departed, and she bestowed the final gifts upon your ashes. Here your sister has torn at her disheveled hair and shared the burden of grief with your distraught mother.

---

19 Cf. Maltby 2002.187 (ad loc. Tibullus 1.3.5–9): "The anaphora of *non* (5, 7, 9) heightens the pathos of T[ibullus]'s imagined funeral far from home."

20 See Williams 2003.226 on the echoes of Tibullus 1.3.5–6 in *Amores* 3.9.49–50 and Tibullus 1.3.7–8 in *Amores* 3.9.51–52. See Cornacchia 1989 for a discussion of the relationship between *Amores* 3.9.58 and a passage from another Tibullan poem, Tibullus 1.1.60.

> Nemesis and her predecessor have added their kisses to those of your family and have not left your pyre deserted. Upon leaving the funeral, Delia said, "More happily was I your beloved: you lived as long as I was your flame." To this Nemesis said, "Why is my loss your grief? As he was dying he held me with his failing hand."

*Mater, soror,* and Delia all appear in the same case in Tibullus 1.3 and *Amores* 3.9: *mater*, *Amores* 3.9.50 ~ *mater*, Tibullus 1.3.5; *soror*, *Amores* 3.9.51 ~ *soror*, Tibullus 1.3.7; Delia, *Amores* 3.9.55 ~ Delia, Tibullus 1.3.9. *Soror* and Delia even appear in the same metrical position in their respective lines in the two poems. Moreover, *cineres* in *Amores* 3.9.50 echoes *cineri* in Tibullus 1.3.7, and *comas* in *Amores* 3.9.52 appears in the same *sedes* as *comis* in Tibullus 1.3.8 (cf. Perkins 1992–93.463). In contrast, no meaningful verbal similarities are to be found between *Amores* 3.9.49–58 and *Tristia* 3.3.39–46.[21] The line-initial anaphora of *nec* in *Tristia* 3.3.39, 41, and 43 may mirror the line-initial anaphora of *hic* in *Amores* 3.9.49 and 51, but it is nevertheless the case that the verbal echoes of *Amores* 3.9.49–58 in *Tristia* 3.3.39–46 are faint and unlikely to be recognized on their own.[22] However, their relationship to each other becomes clear through their mutual relationship to the same passage in Tibullus 1.3.

In this instance, *Tristia* 3.3.39–46 appears, at first, to evoke Tibullus 1.3.5–10 sympathetically through the repetition of negatives to convey the absence of loved ones. However, recognition of the allusive relationship between *Amores* 3.9 and the same passage in Tibullus 1.3 cancels that sympathy by making it apparent that Ovid will experience what Tibullus only feared would happen to him, but, ultimately, did not. As we shall see next, this difference has profound metaphysical ramifications for Ovid.

## THE HEREAFTER

In the *Tristia*, Ovid does not imagine that his situation will improve in the hereafter. Rather, he fears that he will wander among barbarians even after his death. This gloomy vision of his life after death stands in stark

---

21 *Ocellos* in *Amores* 3.9.49 does echo *oculos* in *Tristia* 3.3.44, albeit faintly. The echo, however, is not enough to establish a firm connection between the two poems.

22 See Wills 1996.397–418 on line-initial anaphora.

contrast to the sensual paradise that Tibullus imagined would await him (*Tristia* 3.3.59–64):

> atque utinam pereant animae cum corpore nostrae,
> effugiatque avidos pars mihi nulla rogos!
> nam si morte carens vacua volat altus in aura
> spiritus, et Samii sunt rata dicta senis,
> inter Sarmaticas Romana vagabitur umbras,
> perque feros manes hospita semper erit.
>
> If only my spirit were to perish with my body, and no part of me were to escape the greedy funeral pyre! For if my spirit, deprived of death, flits aloft in the empty air, and if the teachings of that old man from Samos are true, it will wander as a Roman among Sarmatic shades, and it will always be a stranger among hostile spirits of the dead.

Tibullus 1.3.59–64:

> hic choreae cantusque vigent, passimque vagantes
> dulce sonant tenui gutture carmen aves,
> fert casiam non culta seges, totosque per agros
> floret odoratis terra benigna rosis:
> hic iuvenum series teneris immixta puellis
> ludit, et assidue proelia miscet Amor.
>
> Here dancing and singing thrive, and birds flitting here and there sing with dulcet voice their sweet song. The fields, untended, bear fragrant herbs, and throughout every field the fruitful earth blooms in sweet-smelling roses. A group of youths plays intertwined with tender young girls, and Love always enters the fray.

Although they do not share any remarkable verbal similarities, the shared setting and the identical placement of the passages in their respective poems are enough to evoke the contrast. Yet since *Tristia* 3.3 already contrasts with Tibullus 1.3 on this point, there would appear to be no reason to invoke *Amores* 3.9 to undermine Tibullus's text, as above. However, *Amores* 3.9 does suggest an alternative to Tibullus's vision of the afterlife that turns out to be even further removed from the gloomy one that *Tristia* 3.3 presents.

When Ovid expresses his wish for complete physical and metaphysical annihilation in *Tristia* 3.3.59–60, he recalls the opposite wish that he made in *Amores* 3.9, that some part of Tibullus would survive the funeral pyre and find its way to Elysium (*Amores* 3.9.59–66):

> si tamen e nobis aliquid nisi nomen et umbra
> restat, in Elysia valle Tibullus erit.
> obvius huic venies hedera iuvenalia cinctus
> tempora cum Calvo, docte Catulle, tuo;
> tu quoque, si falsum est temerati crimen amici,
> sanguinis atque animae prodige Galle tuae.
> his comes umbra tua est, si qua est modo corporis umbra;
> auxisti numeros, culte Tibulle, pios.
>
> If something beyond a name and a shade remains after death, Tibullus will be in the Elysian fields. You, clever Catullus, your youthful temples adorned with ivy, will meet this man with your friend Calvus; and you too, Gallus, unstinting in heart and soul, if the charge of dishonored friendship is false. Your shade is their companion, if there remains any part of your body other than a shade; you have increased their revered numbers, dear Tibullus.

*Amores* 3.9, then, presents a view of the afterlife that is neither a poet's hell (*Tristia* 3.3) nor a paradise for lovers (Tibullus 1.3).[23] Rather, *Amores* 3.9 presents a paradise for *love poets*, where Tibullus will take his place in the pantheon of Roman literary greats (cf. Williams 2003.227–28). It is still a

---

23 Brazouski 1990.36, after providing an excellent summary of traditional depictions of the underworld, concludes "the idea that Elysium is the eternal house of devoted lovers is found throughout ancient Greek and Roman literature and finds its fullest expression in Tibullus 1.3." See also Eisenberger 1960.193–94 and Whitaker 1983.71–72. Mills 1973–74.231 suggests: "Because singing and song are closely related to poetry, the Elysian paradise as a place of song has a natural affinity and appeal to Tibullus' poetic temperament." Cf. Bright 1971.202 and 1978.28–29, Henderson 1969, Cairns 1979.52, and Boyd 1997.186–87 on Tibullus's vision of Elysium as a paradise for lovers. For more on Tibullus's version of the underworld, see Della Corte 1982, Henderson 1969, Müller 1995, and Morelli 1991.

paradise, but not at all what Tibullus envisioned, and it stands at a distant remove from the afterlife to which Ovid is doomed in the *Tristia*.

Tibullus 1.3 again acts as the linchpin between the two Ovidian poems, but this time it operates in a slightly different way. Instead of bringing in *Amores* 3.9 to undermine an apparently sympathetic allusion in *Tristia* 3.3, it works in concert with *Amores* 3.9 to reinforce the contrast between the dismal afterlife that awaits the exiled poet and the cheerful one that awaits Tibullus. In other words, it is bad enough that Tibullus might find happiness in a lover's paradise while Ovid languishes in a depressing, exilic underworld; even worse is the prospect that Tibullus will join other poets in the hereafter while Ovid wanders among barbarian shades. However, as we shall see next, Ovid does hold out some hope of literary immortality.

## EPITAPHS

Since one of the more memorable features of Tibullus 1.3 is the poet's epitaph, it does not come as a surprise that Ovid includes his own epitaph in *Tristia* 3.3.[24] As with their visions of the hereafter, Ovid's epitaph differs from Tibullus's in many ways, but in this particular instance, *Amores* 3.9 will reconcile their differences and suggest a more suitable memorial for both poets. Tibullus 1.3 again operates as a linchpin between the two Ovidian poems, but this time the connection is made all the stronger by unmediated allusions to *Amores* 3.9 in the lines of *Tristia* 3.3 that precede and follow Ovid's epitaph.

After offering instructions to his wife for his final arrangements, Ovid discloses what he would like to appear on his tombstone (*Tristia* 3.3.73–76):

HIC • EGO • QVI • IACEO • TENERORVM • LVSOR • AMORVM
INGENIO • PERII • NASO • POETA • MEO
AT • TIBI • QVI • TRANSIS • NE • SIT • GRAVE • QVISQVIS • AMASTI
DICERE • NASONIS • MOLLITER • OSSA • CVBENT

24 On Tibullus's epitaph, see Schmidt 1985.312–16. On Ovid's epitaph, see Herescu 1958, Lascu 1971 and 1972, and Schmidt 1985.323–30. On epitaphs in Latin poetry in general, Schmidt 1985 provides an excellent survey. See also Lattimore 1962 and Pieri 1988.

> Here I lie, the player in the game of tender loves, Naso the Poet, who perished because of my own talent. But let it not be difficult for you who have experienced love, whoever you are, to say "may the bones of Naso rest lightly."

The formulaic language (*hic ego qui iaceo*) recalls Tibullus's epitaph (1.3.55–56):[25]

> HIC • IACET • IMMITI • CONSVMPTVS • MORTE • TIBVLLVS
> MESSALLAM • TERRA • DVM • SEQVITVRQVE • MARI[26]

> Here lies Tibullus, overtaken by a cruel death while he followed Messalla on land and sea.

Beyond that, however, the two epitaphs are quite different. Tibullus refers only to his role as a soldier, making no mention at all of his poetry, a fact that many commentators have found peculiar.[27] Perhaps even more puzzling, however, is Ovid's desire to be remembered as the *tenerorum lusor amorum*, despite his efforts to distance himself from his erotic poetry in exile (e.g., *Tristia* 1.1.55–56, 111–14; 2.1–12, 353–58; 3.1.3–8).[28] The contrast be-

---

25 See Lascu 1972 on Ovid's appropriation of traditional epitaphic language. Cf. Maltby 2002.201 (ad loc. Tibullus 1.3.55–56): "The phrase *hic iacet* is very common as the opening of real epitaphs, e.g., *CLE* 425.1, 430.1, 442.1, 508.1, 547.1, etc."

26 Luck 1998 does not print these lines in small caps as I have here to emphasize the epitaphic language.

27 Lee-Stecum 1998.118 briefly surveys the various interpretations of Tibullus's epitaph that have been offered in the past. Cf. Schmidt 1985.315, Ball 1983.57, Maltby 2002.201 (ad loc. Tibullus 1.3.55–56), Murgatroyd 1980.117, Lee 1990.121, and Eisenberger 1960.192. Note also the silence of Aeschylus's epitaph (*Vita* 11) on his literary achievement (cf. Paus. 1.14.5). Sabot 1976.277, note 153, explains that the epitaphs of poets traditionally affirm their immortality, and he cites as examples the epitaphs of Ennius (*Epigrams* 17–18 V3 = 9–10 *ROL*), Sappho (*A.P.* 7.14, 16, 17), Sophocles (*A.P.* 7.21), and Euripides (*A.P.* 7.43).

28 One might also wonder why Ovid reuses the phrase *tenerorum lusor amorum* in the first line of *Tristia* 4.10, his autobiographical *sphragis*, which might also be seen as an extended version of his epitaph. The rest of the poem makes it easier to understand the phrase. In line 54, Ovid identifies himself as the fourth in the series of love poets, after Tibullus, Calvus, and Propertius. At the time of his exile, the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* had not been published (cf. *Tristia* 4.10.61–64), so he would have been known to most people as a love poet. On this point, see Videau-Delibes 1991.342–43. Consider also the case of Ennius, who mentions only the *Annales* in his epitaph (Cic. *Tusc*. 1.15.34). On *Tristia* 4.10 in general, see Fredericks 1976, Fairweather 1987, Ciccarelli 1997, Gómez Pallarès 1999.

tween Tibullus's reticence about his poetic career and Ovid's unabashed profession of his underlines a fundamental problem with both epitaphs: neither one can adequately convey the complexity of the poets' lives or of their works.

In his epitaph, Tibullus identifies himself officially as a soldier in the service of Messalla. However, his unofficial position emerges in the couplet that immediately follows his epitaph, where Tibullus begins to imagine what he will experience in the underworld.[29] He claims that Venus herself will accompany him to the Elysian fields because he has always been "receptive to tender Love" ("sed me, quod facilis tenero sum semper Amori, / ipsa Venus campos ducet in Elysios," Tibullus 1.3.57–58). His epitaph, then, is a memorial of his official life as a soldier, but his vision of a lover's paradise in the underworld reveals his allegiance to Venus and his unofficial life as a love poet.[30] In other words, his epitaph tells us what Tibullus did, but the couplets that follow tell us who Tibullus was.

In contrast, the first line of Ovid's epitaph commemorates his official role as "the player in the game of tender loves." With this phrase, Ovid has transformed Tibullus's "unofficial" language ("facilis *tenero* sum semper *Amori*") into a title—in the truest sense of the word *titulus*—for himself. Instead of being merely "receptive to tender Love," Ovid literally surrounds himself ("*tenerorum* lusor *amorum*") with it and makes it part of his official identity. Put another way, he has set in stone his identity as a love poet.

But what good is a title on an epitaph? In the absence of the rest of his poetry, Ovid's epitaph would provide meager proof of his skill as a poet; if all that remained of Tibullus's poetry were his epitaph, we would not know at all that Tibullus had been a poet. Indeed, Ovid has made this point

---

29 Ball 1983.57 expresses disbelief at the contents of Tibullus's epitaph: "I cannot believe that he does not feel some regret for having followed the general on a military expedition that has taken him away from his mistress and brought him to the brink of destruction." Eisenberger 1960.192–93 suggests that Tibullus's epitaph is meant to contrast the senselessness of life in a world of war and campaigning with the peaceful bliss of the hereafter. Cf. Kennedy 1993.17 on the difficulties of discovering the "real" identity of the poet.

30 Cf. Kennedy 1993.17: "For public consumption, the lover who imagines himself cavorting around the Elysian Fields or returning to the arms of his rapturous beloved, wishes to be seen (fantasizes being seen?) as the model of a loyal soldier, following his commander even to his death."

before, in *Amores* 3.9, when he invoked Tibullus's self-composed epitaph (*Amores* 3.9.39–40):[31]

> carminibus confide bonis: iacet ecce Tibullus;
> vix manet e tanto, parva quod urna capit.
>
> Trust in beautiful songs: here lies Tibullus; a small urn holds what little remains of such a great man.

Several similarities to Tibullus 1.3 suggest that this passage is an allusion to Tibullus's epitaph. The words *iacet ecce* echo the formulaic language that opens Tibullus's epitaph, *hic iacet*, and Tibullus's name itself appears in the final position on the hexameter line in both instances. Indeed, without the phrase *carminibus confide bonis*, the couplet resembles a fragmentary poetic epitaph:[32]

IACET • ECCE • TIBVLLVS
VIX • MANET • E • TANTO • PARVA • QVOD • VRNA• CAPIT

As a fragment, this passage demonstrates the limitations of a funerary inscription in general, and the failure of Tibullus's epitaph in particular. It meets the basic requirements of an epitaph by recording the name of the deceased and implying that he was an important man. From the meter in the second line, it is also possible to infer that the epitaph is in the form of an elegiac couplet, but there is no indication of just how appropriate the meter is, because we would have no way of knowing that the deceased was a love poet who regularly composed elegiac couplets if those elegiac couplets had not survived. This is, of course, one of the problems with Tibullus's own version of his epitaph: the greater significance of the elegiac couplet will be lost on someone who does not know that the deceased was a love poet. It

---

31 Taylor 1970.476 suggests that *Amores* 3.9.37–40 provides "an example of the typical Alexandrian funerary epigram." Cf. Weinlich 1999.235.

32 An anonymous reader of this paper has suggested another possibility for the phrase *carminibus confide bonis*: we can read the addressee not as Tibullus but as the reader of the epitaph. The message then becomes, "Trust in fine verse, you who read this epitaph: behold, here lies Tibullus; a small urn holds what little remains of this great man—great because we can trust in the survival of fine verse such as his." I am grateful for the suggestion, which supplements the argument that I have put forth above.

does not matter, then, whether Tibullus's own epitaph or the fragmentary one in *Amores* 3.9 stands over the grave of Tibullus, since neither reveals much about the man. In the absence of his literary work, neither epitaph will preserve much more than Tibullus's name.

Ovid's own epitaph in *Tristia* 3.3 is not as generic as Tibullus's epitaph or the fragmentary epitaph in *Amores* 3.9. Nevertheless, it does not do much more to preserve Ovid's memory. The first couplet reveals Ovid's name, his title, and the reason for his death. The second couplet repeats his name and asks the reader to pray for Ovid's remains to have a peaceful rest. The identification of Ovid as a poet allows him to play with the generic ambiguity of the elegiac couplet. That is, the meter is appropriate for an epitaph, but doubly so in this case because we know by its content that this is the epitaph of a love poet who regularly composed verses in elegiac couplets. However, despite the cleverness of the inscription and the self-identification of Ovid as a poet, the epitaph can guarantee only the kind of limited immortality that poets such as Gallus and Calvus enjoy today: that is, in name alone. Indeed, the physical limitations of space constrain the effectiveness of any epitaph: a few lines of elegiac poetry cannot adequately encapsulate anyone's life; they certainly cannot provide a representative sample of the creative output of one of Rome's most prolific poets.

At the heart of this allusion lies the vast difference between a poet's physical body and his literary corpus. Indeed, it lies at the heart of the whole poem. The lines that precede Ovid's epitaph in *Tristia* 3.3 illustrate the point (3.3.65–66):

> ossa tamen facito *parva* referantur in *urna*:
> sic ego non etiam mortuus exul ero.
>
> Nevertheless, see to it that my bones are brought back in a small urn: this way I will not be an exile even in death.

I have emphasized the words *parva* and *urna* to call attention to the echo of the epitaphic fragment that appears in *Amores* 3.9.39–40:

> carminibus confide bonis: iacet ecce Tibullus;
> vix manet e tanto, *parva* quod *urna* capit.
>
> Trust in beautiful songs: here lies Tibullus; a small urn holds what little remains of such a great man.

What happens to the physical bodies of poets does not matter. Tibullus's fears of dying in an unknown land did not come true, yet his mortal remains will reside in a container identical to the one that will hold those of Ovid, who died the death that Tibullus only feared. The generic quality of the urns underlines the ineffectiveness of any physical memorial as a record of a poet's literary activity. Just as funerary urns need only a small capacity to contain the ashes of a person's entire body, the limits of space constrain the content of a funerary epigram to a few details. Neither one can adequately preserve the memory of what a person did in life.

In the lines that follow immediately after his epitaph, however, Ovid speaks of the immortality of his other corpus, recalling again the fragmentary epitaph in *Amores* 3.9 (*Tristia* 3.3.77–80):

> hoc satis in titulo est: etenim maiora libelli
> et diuturna magis sunt monimenta mihi,
> quos ego confido, quamvis nocuere, daturos
> nomen et auctori tempora longa suo.
>
> This is enough for an inscription, because a greater and more lasting monument for me will be my little books, which, I trust, will grant a name and a long life to their author, even though they harmed him.

What made the epitaph in *Amores* 3.9 fragmentary was the removal of the first three words: *carminibus confide bonis*. These are also the very words that obviate the need for an epitaph, since they encourage Tibullus to trust in poetry to ensure the immortality of his literary corpus.[33] Now, in *Tristia* 3.3, Ovid himself uses the same verb, *confidere*, to express his own hope for literary immortality.[34] Although he has written a full epitaph for himself, he does not trust it to be a true memorial. As an epitaph, it will suffice ("hoc satis in titulo est"); it will do what an epitaph is supposed to do and preserve Ovid's name and some other information about him. However, he follows

---

33 Boyd 1997.185 illustrates the point nicely by pointing out that, in *Amores* 3.9.57–58, "Nemesis' use of words once written by Tibullus for his first lover, Delia, suggests that the power of poetry to flourish on its own has already begun to transcend the limitation of mortality imposed on the poet."

34 The allusion is identified by Luck 1977.183 ad loc. *Tristia* 3.3.79f.: "*confido*: *Amores* 3,9,38 *carminibus confide bonis*."

the advice that he gave to Tibullus and trusts beautiful songs—his own and others—to bear witness to his literary activity.[35]

In the end, Ovid's physical remains will scatter on the winds, just as Tibullus's did; but his body of work will find immortality in the poetic memory of contemporary and future readers, just as Tibullus's poem lives in *Amores* 3.9 and *Tristia* 3.3.[36] Indeed, this is the message of the entire poem, and it is a recurring theme in the *Tristia* as a whole.[37] By including his own poetry in such a complex and ornate series of allusions, Ovid asserts that his poetry has a lasting place in Roman literary culture and deserves to be remembered along with the poetry of Tibullus and his other predecessors. At the same time, he has garnered special sympathy for his plight in exile by comparing and contrasting it with Tibullus's (unrealized) fears of dying in an unknown world. Most importantly, he has demonstrated that his literary corpus will provide a more meaningful memorial of his literary life than any epitaph that he could compose.[38]

*The University of Oklahoma*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ball, Robert J. 1983. *Tibullus the Elegist: A Critical Survey*. Göttingen.

Bonvicini, Mariella et al. 1991. *Ovidio: Tristia*. Milan.

Boyd, Barbara Weiden. 1997. *Ovid's Literary Loves: Influence and Innovation in the* Amores. Ann Arbor.

Brazouski, Antoinette. 1990. "Lovers in Elysium," *CB* 66.35–36.

---

35 Literary immortality had been Ovid's concern as early as the *Amores* (e.g., *Amores* 1.15.7–8, 41–42; 3.15.8, 20), and continued to be a goal throughout his career (e.g., *Ars* 2.739–40, 3.403–04; *Met*. 15.871–79; *Tristia* 3.7.45–52, 4.10.127–30). On poetic immortality in Ovid, see Boyd 1997.165–202, Nagle 1980.77–81, Claassen 1996, Videau-Delibes 1991.448–55, Farrell 1999, Hardie 2002.91–97. Cf. Boyd 1997.179–89 on poetic immortality as the subject of the allusive relationship between *Amores* 3.9 and Tibullus 1.3.

36 Cf. Hardie 2002.96 on *Met*. 15.876: "Ovid will become the fixed and enduring monument, the *nomen indelebile* (15.876), an inscribed name that cannot be erased, but he will also live on the lips of every reader who animates anew the poetic *corpus* (15.878–9)."

37 E.g., *Tristia* 1.7.25–26, 3.7.45–52, 4.10.127–30, 5.7b.29–30, 5.14.5–6.

38 I wish to thank Professor Teresa R. Ramsby for sharing her work on Ovidian epitaphs with me prior to its publication in an upcoming volume of the *Classical Journal*. I also wish to thank Professors C. M. C. Green, Peter Green, and Ellen Greene for their advice and encouragement. Finally, I wish to thank the anonymous reader for *Arethusa* for the many valuable suggestions that improved this paper.

Bright, David F. 1971. "A Tibullan Odyssey," *Arethusa* 4.197–214.
———. 1978. *Haec mihi fingebam: Tibullus in his World.* Leiden.
Cahoon, Leslie. 1984–85. "The Parrot and the Poet: The Function of Ovid's Funeral Elegies," *CJ* 80.27–35.
Cairns, Francis. 1979. *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome*. Cambridge.
Ciccarelli, Irma. 1997. "Ovidio, Tristia 4, 10 e i topoi della sphragís," *Aufidus* 11.32.61–92.
Claassen, Jo-Marie. 1996. "Exile, Death and Immortality: Voices from the Grave," *Latomus* 55.571–90.
Cook, Erwin. 1992. "Ferrymen of Elysium and the Homeric Phaeacians," *JIES* 20.239–67.
Cornacchia, Giuseppe Antonio. 1989. "Ovidio, Amores 3, 9, 58," in *Mnemosynum: Studi in onore di Alfredo Ghiselli*. Bologna. 101–02.
Della Corte, Francesco. 1982. "Il catalogo dei grandi dannati," *Vichiana* 11.95–99.
Eisenberger, H. 1960. "Der innere Zusammenhang der Motive in Tibulls Gedicht I, 3," *Hermes* 88.188–97.
Esteve-Forriol, José. 1962. "Die Trauer- und Trostgedichte in der römischen Literatur, untersucht nach ihrer Topik und ihrem Motivschatz," Diss. Munich.
Evans, Harry B. 1983. *Publica Carmina: Ovid's Books from Exile*. Lincoln.
Fairweather, Janet. 1987. "Ovid's Autobiographical Poem, *Tristia* 4.10," *CQ* 37.181–96.
Farrell, Joseph. 1999. "The Ovidian *Corpus*: Poetic Body and Poetic Text," *PCPS* suppl. 23.127–41.
Fredericks, B. R. 1976. "*Tristia* 4.10: Poet's Autobiography and Poetic Autobiography," *TAPA* 106.39–54.
Gómez Pallarès, Joan. 1999. "*Ovidius Epigraphicus*: *Tristia*, Lib. 1, con excursus a 3,3 y 4,10," in *Ovid, Wirk und Wirkung: Festgabe für Michael von Albrecht zum 65 Geburtstag*, vol. 2, Werner Schubert, ed. Frankfurt am Main. 755–73.
Green, Peter. 1994. *Ovid: The Poems of Exile*. London.
Hardie, Philip. 2002. *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion*. Cambridge.
Henderson, A.A.R. 1969. "Tibullus, Elysium and Tartarus," *Latomus* 28.649–53.
Herescu, Niculae. 1958. "Le sens de l'épitaphe ovidienne," in *Ovidiana: Recherches sur Ovide, publiées à l'occasion du bimillénaire de la naissance du poète*, Niculae Herescu, ed. Paris. 420–42.

Kennedy, Duncan F. 1993. *The Arts of Love: Five Studies in the Discourse of Roman Love Elegy*. Cambridge.

Kenney, E. J. 1995. *P. Ovidi Nasonis Amores, Medicamina Faciei Femineae, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amores*. Oxford.

Lascu, Nicolae. 1971. "Hic Ego Qui Iaceo . . . (Epigrafie si poezie)," *Pontica* 4.211–19.

———. 1972. "L'epitaffo di Ovidio (Epigrafia e poesia)," in *Studi classici in onore di Quintino Cataudella*. Catania. 331–38.

Lattimore, Richard. 1962. *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*. Urbana.

Lee, Guy. 1990[3]. *Tibullus:* Elegies (rev. with Robert Maltby). Leeds.

Lee-Stecum, Parshia. 1998. *Powerplay in Tibullus: Reading* Elegies *Book One*. Cambridge.

Lenz, Friedrich Walter. 1959. *Albii Tibulli aliorumque carminum libri tres*. Leiden.

Lenz, Lutz. 1997. "Tibull in den *Tristien*," *Gymnasium* 104.301–17.

Luck, Georg. 1967. *P. Ovidius Naso*: Tristia, *vol. 1, Text und Übersetzung.* Heidelberg.

———. 1977. *P. Ovidius Naso:* Tristia*, vol. 2, Kommentar*. Heidelberg.

———. 1998. *Tibullus*. Stuttgart.

McLennan, George. 1972. "Arte Allusiva and Ovidian Metrics," *Hermes* 100.495–96.

Maltby, Robert. 2002. *Tibullus:* Elegies. Cambridge.

Mills, Donald H. 1973–74. "Tibullus and Phaeacia: A Reinterpretation of 1.3," *CJ* 69.226–33.

Morelli, Alfredo M. 1991. "I 'Saturnia regna' nell'elegia 1, 3 di Tibullo," *MD* 26.175–87.

Moreno, Jesús Luque. 1995. "Tibullo a través de Ovidio," *Emeritá* 63.341–51.

Müller, Carl Werner. 1995. "Imaginationen des Todes in den Elegien des Tibull und Properz," *A&A* 41.132–41.

Munari, Franco. 1951. *P. Ovidi Nasonis: Amores.* Firenze.

Murgatroyd, Paul. 1980. *Tibullus I: A Commentary on the First Book of the* Elegies *of Albius Tibullus*. Pietermaritzburg.

Nagle, Betty Rose. 1980. *The Poetics of Exile: Program and Polemic in the* Tristia *and* Epistulae ex Ponto *of Ovid* (Coll. Latomus 170). Brussels.

Némethy, Géza. 1907. *P. Ovidii Nasonis Amores*. Budapest.

Neumeister, Christoff. 1986. *Tibull: Einführung in sein Werk*. Heidelberg.

Owen, Sidney George. 1893[2]. Tristia *Book III*. Oxford.

Peigney, J. 1988. "La Phéacie, terre poétique," in *Peuples et pays mythiques: Actes du V^e Colloque du Centre de recherches mythologiques de l'Université de Paris X (Chantilly, 18–20 septembre 1986)*, Francis Jouan and Bernard Deforge, eds. Paris. 47–56.

Perkins, Caroline A. 1992–93. "Love's Arrows Lost: Tibullan Parody in *Amores* 3.9," *CW* 86.459–66.

Pieri, Maria-Pace. 1988. "L'autocompianto funebre del poeta elegiaco," in *Munus amicitiae: scritti in memoria di Alessandro Ronconi*, vol. 2. Firenze. 98–111.

Reed, Joseph D. 1997. "Ovid's Elegy on Tibullus and its Models," *CP* 92.260–69.

Sabot, A.-F. 1976. *Ovide: poète de l'amour dans ses œvres de jeunesse: Amores, Héroïdes, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris, De Medicamine Faciei Femineae*. Gap.

Schmidt, V. 1985. "Hic ego qui iaceo: Die lateinischen Elegiker und ihre Grabschrift," *Mnemosyne* 38.307–33.

Taylor, Jennifer Hassel. 1970. "*Amores* 3.9: A Farewell to Elegy," *Latomus* 29.474–77.

Thomas, Richard F. 1982. "Catullus and the Polemics of Poetic Reference (Poem 64.1–18)," *AJP* 103.144–64.

———. 1986. "Virgil's *Georgics* and the Art of Reference," *HSCP* 90.71–198.

Videau-Delibes, Anne. 1991. *Les Tristes d'Ovide et l'élégie romaine: une poétique de la rupture*. Paris.

von Albrecht, Michael. 1982. "De Ovidio Tibulli imitatore," in *De Tibullo eiusque aetate*, Oswald Dilke et al., eds. Rome. 37–45.

Weinlich, Barbara. 1999. *Ovids Amores: Gedichtfolge und Handlungsablauf*. Stuttgart.

Whitaker, Richard. 1983. *Myth and Personal Experience in Roman Love-Elegy*. Göttingen.

Williams, Frederick. 2003. "The Hands of Death: Ovid *Amores* 3.9.20," *AJP* 124.2.225–34.

Wills, Jeffrey. 1996. *Repetition in Latin Poetry: Figures of Allusion*. Oxford.

Zingerle, Anton. 1869. *Ovidius und sein Verhältnis zu den Vorgängern und gleichzeitigen römischen Dichtern*. Innsbruck.